

Marked-up Version of Rewritten Claims (37 CFR 1.121(c)(1)(ii)):

1. (Twice-Amended) A protective element[, particularly for] in a pair of cycling shorts, said protective element comprising a double-stretch support of said cycling shorts with which at least one double-stretch padding is [associated] connected, said double-stretch padding being [associable at said support by a high-frequency or thermoformation or ultrasound application method, said double-stretch padding being applied only at points where resting on a saddle of a bicycle occurs] arranged at a crouch region of said pair of cycling shorts, and said double-stretch padding being applied at said crouch region of said pair of cycling shorts in an absence of stitched seams at said double-stretch padding.
2. (amended) The protective element in a pair of cycling shorts according to claim 1, wherein said support made of double-stretch material can elongate along multiple planes, including mutually perpendicular ones.
3. (amended) The protective element in a pair of cycling shorts according to claim 1, wherein said support has an elasticity of up to 30-40%.
4. (amended) The protective element in a pair of cycling shorts according to claim 1, wherein said support is [associatable with a] connected in said pair of cycling shorts.
5. (amended) The protective element in a pair of cycling shorts according to claim 1, wherein said at least one double-stretch padding is an open-cell high-density padding.
6. (amended) The protective element in a pair of cycling shorts according to claim 1, wherein said double-stretch padding is deformable in multiple directions, including mutually perpendicular directions.
7. (amended) The protective element in a pair of cycling shorts according to claim 1, wherein said double-stretch padding has a density between 55 and 95 kg/m<sup>3</sup>.

8. (amended) The protective element in a pair of cycling shorts according to claim 1, wherein said double-stretch padding has a density of 65 kg/m<sup>3</sup>.

9. (amended) The protective element in a pair of cycling shorts according to claim 1, wherein said double-stretch padding has a thickness of 5 to 12 mm.

10. (amended) The protective element in a pair of cycling shorts according to claim 1, wherein said double-stretch padding has a thickness of 10 mm.

11. (amended) The protective element in a pair of cycling shorts according to claim 1, wherein said double-stretch padding is constituted by a first central element which [arranges itself] is arranged approximately at a [the] tangent to an imaginary curved line of [a] the crotch region of [a] the pair of cycling shorts.

12. (amended) The protective element in a pair of cycling shorts according to claim 11, wherein a second element is formed at [the] a front of the crotch region of the pair of cycling shorts, and a pair of third elements are formed at [the] a rear of the crotch region of the pair of cycling shorts, with first flat regions interposed, at transverse ends of said first central element.

13. (amended) The protective element in a pair of cycling shorts according to claim 12, wherein [said second element affects the front region of the crotch while] said third elements are mirror-symmetrical with respect to a central plane which is longitudinal to said double-stretch padding and are mutually divided by [the presence of] a second flat region which accordingly lies at said longitudinal central plane.

14. (amended) The protective element in a pair of cycling shorts according to claim 12, wherein said first flat regions, and therefore the dimensions of said first central element, said second element and said third elements are such that they are formed at a folding region of said double-stretch padding that is not affected, at said first, second and third elements, by any deformation during use.

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18. (amended) The protective element in a pair of cycling shorts according to claim [17] 4,  
wherein said shorts and said support are made of the same material.

**Remarks**

Claims 1-14 and 18-22 are pending. Claims 1 and 19 are the only independent claims.

Applicant respectfully submits that the invention as defined in the independent claim 1 is patentable over the prior art of record.

The prior art of record does not disclose or fairly suggest to a person having ordinary skill in the art to provide the claimed combination of elements in particular including the double-stretch padding arranged at the crouch region of the pair of cycling shorts with the double-stretch padding being applied in the absence of stitched seams. These claimed combined elements advantageously allow to significantly limit discomfort for the user due to friction at the padding in the crouch area (see applicant's original disclosure, page 5, lines 11-13).

The claimed combination and advantageous results are not fairly contemplated in the known prior art.

**Gibbens et al.** discloses a plurality of stitches 7, 12, 15, 16, 24, and 25 in the crouch area (column 2, lines 36, 38, 54, 60, 64).

**Stewart et al.** does not provide any padding in the crouch area, and there furthermore exists stitching at the side pads 11, 13 (column 5, lines 10-11).

**Martin** does not show any crouch area padding, and there further is provided a center sewn seam 20 (column 3, lines 19-20).

**Calvert** shows a sewn-in liquid cushioned bladder (abstract, and column 6, lines 3-4).

**Guelli** shows cushion means secured by sewing (abstract, and column 2, lines 29-42).

**Speth et al.** (cited in the accompanying IDS) shows seat pad 16 stitched conventionally at 27 (column 3, lines 26-27 and Figs. 1-3).

**GERMANY 89 05 746** (cited in the accompanying IDS) shows crouch padding with central stitched elements 14 and 17 (e.g. "Steppnahte" 14 = Step-stitched 14, and "Naht" 17 = Stitch 17).

**Parrish, Duren et al., Ceravolo et al., and Llorens** all do not show any crouch area padding.

In summary, all of the prior art references showing crouch paddings teach the use of stitched seam connections, and even the paddings not arranged in the crouch area of the other references are not disclosed as being provided without stitch seams. Accordingly, applicant submits that there is no fair suggestion in the prior art of record which would lead a person having ordinary skill in the art to arrive at the claimed combination of structural features including in particular the double-stretch padding arranged at the crouch region of the pair of cycling shorts with the double-stretch padding being applied in the absence of stitched seams, for advantageously providing a significant limiting of discomfort for the user due to friction at the padding in the crouch area.

Moreover, applicant submits that the particular structural arrangement (see Fig. 1) of:  
the first central element 6;  
the second front element 8;  
the pair of third rear elements 9a,9b;  
the first flat regions 7a,7b; and  
the second flat region 10;  
as defined in the dependent claims 11-13, is not shown or fairly suggested to a person having ordinary skill in the art anywhere in the prior art of record.

This claimed structural arrangement advantageously provides an effective and efficient shaping, forming, and bending of the protective element, not disclosed nor fairly suggested by the known prior art.

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These structural elements are now also claimed in the newly submitted claims 21 and 22.

In view of the foregoing, applicant respectfully solicits allowance of the pending claims 1-14 and 18-22.

Respectfully submitted,



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